

Sprague Calls JFK, King Cases Murder Probes

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WASHINGTON—Richard A. Sprague looks at the investigations he will direct into the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as a couple of murder cases.



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As he has done throughout a highly successful career as a prosecutor in Philadelphia, Sprague promises to "start from ground zero" and follow trails of evidence even if they lead to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the White House—or Cuba and the Soviet Union.

"No documents are beyond the confines of this investigation," said the chief counsel of the new Committee on Assassinations which will probe the Kennedy and King murders. "The testimony of nobody who is living is beyond the confines of this investigation."

When asked what he would do if the CIA or FBI refused information on "national security" grounds, Sprague quickly responded that he would use the contempt powers of Congress or even take heads of federal agencies to court if necessary.

Those who know Sprague and the way he works warn skeptics not to take his words lightly. They also predict rough traveling ahead in Sprague's relations with members of the new committee.

"Dick's a gut-fighter who doesn't like to take no for an answer," said a lawyer who worked with Sprague in the conviction of former United Mine Workers President W. A. "Tony" Boyle for the murder of UMW activist Joseph Yablonski and his family.

When the Washington County (Pa.) officials who hired Sprague as a special prosecutor in the Yablonski case wanted to quit after the initial convictions—which did not involve Boyle—because the case was costing too much money, Sprague threatened to go public with the information he already had gathered and accuse the county officials of protecting Boyle. They quickly gave him the green light.

The question of money may also be a factor in the work of the select committee. The House Administration Committee under Rep. Frank Thompson, D-N.J., has cut back on the initial budget request submitted by Rep. Thomas Downing, D-Va., who will be chairman of the assassination panel until his retirement in January. Downing asked for \$250,000 for the remainder of 1976 and got \$150,000.

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